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Beginnings of the
"Classical" Heroic Couplet
in England.

University of Michigan

BEQUEATHED BY
George Allison Gench
PROFESSOR OF
Germanic Languages and Literatures
IN THE
University of Michigan,
1896-1899.

March 8 2000

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Dr. George A. Hensch
With the kind regards of the author

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BEGINNINGS

OF THE

"Classical" Heroic Couplet in England

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BY

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Reprinted from *The American Journal of Philology*,
Vol. XI, No. 1, pp. 55-79.

BALTIMORE, 1890

Publication Agency of the Johns Hopkins University

BEGINNINGS OF THE "CLASSICAL" HEROIC
COUPLET IN ENGLAND. 98286

In the year 1885 Mr. Edmund Gosse published a series of collected essays under the title "From Shakespeare to Pope." They had been delivered as lectures before the Johns Hopkins University, and elsewhere in America, the previous year. The argument of these lectures (and the author takes great pride in the irrefragability of the "links of the argument," as his subsequent preface shows) culminated in the following assertions: "I do not myself believe, or see any reason for suspecting, that the change to classicism in England was originally started by direct influence from France any more than from Germany, or from Holland, or from Spain" (p. 17). "I do not believe that Waller was in the very smallest degree affected by the French revolt against the poetry of the renaissance when he opened his campaign against the romantic school at home. I am persuaded that it was the result of one of those atmospheric influences which disturb the tradition of literature simultaneously, and in all the countries of Europe alike, and that it was a much more blind and unconscious movement than that which towards the close of the eighteenth century impelled all the literatures of Europe to throw off the chains which they had adopted one hundred and fifty years before" (p. 19).

Mr. Gosse's grounds for the first assertion are given in the form of a statement of fact; and it must be acknowledged that there is a tradition of two hundred years' standing to recommend it: "Waller was writing poems in distichs, which were often as good as Dryden's ever became, at least as early as 1623" (p. 18), while "Malherbe's poems did not appear in Paris till 1630, two years after his death." "A few of his pieces had come to light [before Waller wrote], but he had issued no book; he was only a fruitifying centre of influence."

It will be observed that we have here two assertions and one statement of fact. The latter is the date of Malherbe's death and that of the issue of his poems. The unsupported assertion is that

¹ Cambridge, At the University Press. The citations in this paper are made from the New York edition, 1885.

Malherbe was only a "fructifying centre of influence," or, as he puts it (p. 18) more plainly: "Malherbe, with whom by universal consent the fashion for correct versifying and the exclusion of ornament set in, was not at this time a poet known even to the French public." Finally, the statement supported by English tradition, *and by this alone*, is to the effect that Waller began writing at least as early as 1623.

Before taking up the questions affecting England it may not be amiss to examine the statements concerning Continental literature. Mr. Gosse now and then speaks of changes which cannot be understood "merely by a reference to our local schools of poetry in England" (p. 13); but a little preliminary consideration will show that there is no real comparative study in his book. On page 17 the admission is made that "at the final decline of the Renaissance it was France that stood at the intellectual head of Europe." But our author finds in this simply an explanation of the fact that the "movement began first in France." In the case of Holland, the point at issue is avoided by what might be called a denial of the major premise; that is, it is denied that there ever had been, properly speaking, any romantic poetry at all in Holland, and it is asserted that Vondel accomplished the change to "classicism" by "polishing the execution of their [of the Dutch] verses." Finally, in the case of Germany, no mention is made of French influence except in the single phrase, "he (Opitz) took his cue directly from Holland and France." But this is only a saving clause, and has no part in his argument. Opitz is made to sound the first note of change in 1617, and, as far as Mr. Gosse is concerned, the matter begins and ends here. Opitz is essentially an autochthon, and is "as rigidly classical, didactic, and anti-romantic as it is possible to be."

This whole representation of the state of things in Holland and Germany is unsatisfactory. Heinsius,¹ who was at this time to Holland what Opitz was to Germany, is not even mentioned. Vondel's services to Dutch literature were of course very great, but the mention of him in *this* connection is unfortunate. For while Heinsius, though borrowing largely from Ronsard, rejected the

¹ Cf. J. B. Muth, *Ueber das Verhältniss von Martin Opitz zu Dan. Heinsius*, Leipziger Diss., 1872, p. 30; Dr. G. Witkowski, *Martin Opitzens Aristarchus*, Leipzig, 1888, p. 6. The dissertation of R. Beckherrn, *Martin Opitz, P. Ronsard und Daniel Heinsius*, Königsberg, 1888, was not accessible.

latter's authority as to the *vers communs*,¹ and elected the Alexandrine, it was Vondel who, in 1659, in his 'Jephte,' introduced in his tragedies the verse of ten syllables, *in deference to the authority of Ronsard*.²

For Germany it will be sufficient to amend Mr. Gosse's picture by a reference to the following authorities. For Opitz' enormous and direct obligations to Heinsius cf. Dr. Karl Borinski, *Die Poetik der Renaissance*, Berlin, 1886, pp. 61-62; and C. W. Berghoeffer, *Martin Opitz' Buch von der deutschen Poeterei*, Frankfurt a.-M., 1888, pp. 34-36, 43. His relation to Ronsard is discussed by Otto Fritsch, *Martin Opitzens Buch von der deutschen Poeterei, Ein kritischer Versuch*, Halle, 1884, p. 76 f. Not even was Opitz' national patriotism in poetical matters original; it was kindled at the French patriotism of Ronsard (Fritsch, p. 31). The assertion that Opitz' couplets were "strictly classical in taste"³ must mean "classical" in the sense in which the word is employed elsewhere in the book; that is, as characterizing the end-stopt couplet. How far this is from the truth is seen in Opitz' own words.⁴

The conclusion forced upon us by this review of Mr. Gosse's brief survey of the condition of literature on the Continent in the second decade of the seventeenth century, is that his estimate of French influence on European literature at this time is lower than the facts warrant. In this way the reform in each country is made to appear quite spontaneous, and Waller's title as originator of a school of literature in England is rendered doubly secure.

Returning then to England, two things arrest our attention, before all others: indifference as to the origin of the "classical" couplet, and a curious persistence of the tradition above referred

¹ But cf. Ronsard, *Œuvres Complètes*, VII 330 f.

² 'Naar dien de edele heer Ronsard, de vorst der Fransche dichteren, deze dichtmaet hooghdravender oordeelt, en beter van zenuwen voorzien, en gesteven dan d'Alexandrijnsche, van twalef en dertien lettergreepen, die, zooveel langer, naer zijn voordeel flaeuwer vallen en meer op ongebonde rede trecken.' *Werken*, door J. van Lennep, VIII, 1863, p. 16. Vondel was no stranger to the couplet before 1659, but the verse he habitually makes use of is the Alexandrine.

³ From Shakespeare to Pope, p. 14.

⁴ "So ist es auch nicht von nöthen, das der periodus oder sentenz allzeit mit dem verse oder der strophe sich ende: ja es stehet zierlich, wann er zum wenigsten biss zue des andern, dritten, vierdten verses, auch des ersten in der folgenden strophe Caesur behalten wird." *Deutsche Poeterei*, ed. Witkowski, p. 185; cf. also Ronsard, *Œuvres*, III 26.

to, that this form of verse is far more beholden to Waller for its introduction and first development than to any other English poet.

In October 1886 a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, who subsequently disclosed himself as Churton Collins, published a violent attack on Mr. Gosse and his book. This was based upon a considerable number of errors in detail, and not only attracted wide attention, but aroused violent discussion in a legion of journals.

But in all this discussion, the theory and the assertions cited above were either not mentioned at all, or were dealt with in a summary and uncritical fashion. The *Quarterly Reviewer* actually rejects as "not practical" the question of the influence of Continental literature upon that of England. His reason is, partly, because "English literature can never be studied properly, unless it be studied in connection with the literature of Greece and Rome," but chiefly, because it is not to be expected that a student should "read, in addition to Greek and Latin, half-a-dozen other languages, and among those languages . . . *Anglo-Saxon and German*" (p. 322). It is difficult to understand Mr. Collins' position in regard to the classical couplet. He does not appear to recognize the existence of that metrical form as distinguished from the Elizabethan rhymed couplet. An instance of the rashness of his statements is this, that Geo. Sandys "wrote heroic couplets simply indistinguishable from Pope's couplets" (p. 304). This is literary criticism "by and large." We shall see below that Sandys' couplets are simply and easily *distinguishable* from those of Pope. The discussion aroused by the *Quarterly Review* article produced absolutely no critical result.

And now, in 1889, in "A History of Eighteenth Century Literature" (London and New York), Mr. Gosse enters the field again with a series of statements, chastened in form, but with unabated clearness and pretension.

"The most obvious phenomenon connected with the change of poetry was the gradual substitution, in non-dramatic verse, . . . of a single normal instrument of versification, namely, the neatly balanced *and unbroken* heroic couplet" (p. 2).¹

"Waller, without apparently any ambition to restore the couplet as Chaucer had left it, nor, on the other hand, any suggestion from France, where the Alexandrine was not yet subjected to a like

"I must insist upon the fact that the principle of the structure of romantic poetry was overflow, that of the classical poetry was distich." From Shakespeare to Pope, p. 47.

reform, revised and strengthened this form of verse, and gave it the character which it retained for no less than one hundred and fifty years" (p. 3).

Let us pause to consider what this means. A youth of eighteen years, still "living in his mother's house in Buckinghamshire," acting upon some impulse or instinct, or enlightenment, writes verses not only of perfect harmony and cadence, but also according to a new principle of structure. Unsupported during many years, and yet persistent, he obtains in 1642 (about twenty years) his first disciple. His earliest verses were not only as good as any he wrote during the course of his long life, they were also better of that kind than any which his contemporaries succeeded in producing. This young man, then, in the manner indicated, set the fashion in English literature. He did more; he fixed the type for one hundred and fifty years. The matter has even been taken up by historians, and we find so capital an authority on the seventeenth century in England as Mr. S. R. Gardiner thus generalizing on Waller's great deed:¹ "Something, no doubt, of that great law of reaction by which the courses of humanity are governed is visible in the adoption, by one whose own life was so dissolute as to cast off all moral restraints, of a scheme of poetry of which the chief characteristic is the subordination of independent thought and fancy to the severest artificial laws of style. Yet, even in this respect Waller was floating on a tide which ran with a greater sweep than could be accounted for by the peculiarities of his individual character." In a note Mr. Gardiner adds: "My own knowledge of the history of poetic form is extremely slight, but I suppose, speaking under correction, that the recent critics of Mr. Gosse, by whose work these paragraphs were suggested, will allow so much to Waller." The generalization is superb, and the fact must be allowed, but is Waller entitled to this extraordinary distinction? The answer must be sought for in his works.

The poem which heads the list in most editions of Waller² is entitled "Of the Danger His Majesty (being Prince) Escaped in the Road at St. Andero," and contains 170 lines in couplets. Charles I is represented embarking off Santander in Spain, after

¹ S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*, Vol. I, London, 1886, pp. 9-10.

² The editions of Waller which were used in preparing the present paper are: London, 1729, ed. Mr. Fenton, 4to; London, 1730, ed. Mr. Fenton, 8vo; and the edition by Robt. Bell, London, 1854, 8vo. Unfortunately, none of the earlier editions were accessible.

his dubious wooing of the Infanta at Madrid, in 1623. The argument is afforded by the fortunate rescue of the barge in which the Prince was, when it was in danger of being swept out of the open roadstead by a sudden squall off shore. There is much mythology of feminine eyes and influences in the poem :

"And dear remembrance of that fatal glance,
For which he lately pawned his heart in France.

When France shall boast of her whose conquering eyes
Have made the best of English hearts their prize."

Mr. Gosse in some incredible way has misread the poem, when a single glance at Dr. Johnson's life of Waller would have set him right. "The dubious and coy position of the Infanta . . . is lightly touched" (p. 49). But the Infanta is not even referred to. The "fatal glance" is owned by the French Princess Henrietta Maria, daughter of Henry IV. Charles had seen her, but by no means "pawned his heart" to her, while travelling incognito through France, a few months before, to reach Spain and the Infanta.¹ The marriage between Charles and Henrietta Maria had been talked of in January 1624, but the whole matter was disavowed by its promoters, Buckingham and Marie de Médicis, as soon as it was noised abroad.² That a time-serving poet like Waller, who risked his art only on certainties, should have written the piece at this time is impossible. The marriage treaty was signed in November, the dispensation for it granted in Rome in December, and the marriage itself took place May 1, 1625, after Charles had ascended the throne. All Waller's commentators have dated the poem 1623. Fenton (1730) wishes to prove by the date that "Waller began to write only twenty-five years after the death of Spenser." Gosse conjures up the following dramatic situation: "It was distinctly an inspiration for a lad of eighteen, in the winter of 1623, when Ben Jonson, and Chapman, and Drayton were the poets most in vogue, resolutely to sit down without a model to write a long poem on the exciting incident of the moment, the danger Prince Charles had just escaped on his return voyage from Spain" (pp. 48-9). Dr. Johnson³ stands alone in the opinion that the piece "could not have been the sudden effu-

¹ S. R. Gardiner, *Prince Charles and the Spanish Marriage*, Vol. II, 1869, p. 303.

² S. R. Gardiner, *History of England under the Duke of Buckingham and Charles I*, Vol. I, 1875, p. 5.

³ *Lives of the Poets*, London (Warne & Co.), n. d., pp. 96-7.

sion of fancy, and must have been written after the event." A careful reading of the poem, with the attested fact in mind that Waller composed slowly and painfully, and kept his pieces long by him,¹ must convince any unprejudiced reader that Dr. Johnson is right. The poem cannot have been written before 1625, and was more probably—for reasons which will appear later on—produced later still.

With two or three exceptions, to be presently mentioned, there is no evidence that Waller wrote anything further before 1635. And there is direct evidence to the contrary. Lord Clarendon, in his *Life*, has given us a complete picture of Waller.² "He had the good fortune to have an alliance and friendship with Dr. Morley, who had assisted and instructed him in the reading many good books, to which his natural parts and promptitude inclined him, especially the poets; and at the age when other men used to give over writing verses (for he was near thirty years when he first engaged himself in that exercise, at least that he was known to do so), he surprised the town with two or three pieces of that kind, as if a tenth muse had been born to cherish drooping poetry. The doctor (Morley) at that time brought him into that company, which was most celebrated for good conversation, etc."

Dr. Morley,³ afterwards Bp. of Winchester, was a great student, and had distinguished friends. It is furthermore known that he lived in Waller's house at Beaconsfield several years, and assisted him in his literary studies. The circle to which Waller was introduced was the famous one which gathered around Lord Falkland at Great Tew, twelve miles from Oxford.⁴ Falk-

Five couplets written in the Tasso of Her Royal Highness (Fenton's ed., 1730, p. 175) are said on the authority of the Duke of Buckingham to have cost Waller the greater part of a summer, in composition and correction.

² *Life of Edward, Earl of Clarendon*. Vol. I. Oxford, 1827, pp. 53-54.

³ The story that Waller discovered and befriended Morley, and introduced him to the literary circle, is so evidently a fabrication as to be scarcely deserving of mention; cf. Bell's edition of Waller's *Poems* (1854), p. 18, note.

⁴ The exact date at which Falkland's life at Great Tew began is not known. He returned from Ireland "when he was about the age of eighteen years" (Clarendon, I 42), as the heir of his grandfather, and became possessor of the manor at the death of his grandmother, which "fell out about the time that he was nineteen years of age" (p. 43). But it is clear that he may have kept open house there before her death. This, together with the probability that he was born, not in 1610, as commonly assumed, but in 1609 (S. R. Gardiner, in *Dict. Nat. Biog.* IX 246), makes 1627 not too early a date for the beginning of his hospitalities at Great Tew.

land, himself no great poet, but confessedly a good judge of poetry,¹ and one of the foremost men of his time in character, was the hospitable centre around which these bright spirits of Old and New England revolved. Ben Jonson was a frequent visitor, and other members were Clarendon, then a young law student "at gaze," John Earle of Oxford, Dr. Morley, and Geo. Sandys. Clarendon's attitude towards Lord Falkland is well known; he makes him the centre and hero of his history. It is therefore reasonably certain that Clarendon must have exactly known the members of the literary set around Lord Falkland, "their exits and their entrances," and must have been in some degree acquainted with their pretensions in literature. Waller cannot have begun producing his occasional pieces after 1627, and it is extremely probable that Clarendon, who was no poet, did not share in the intimate literary discussions of the circle. Certain poems of Waller, when passed around and commented on, might therefore escape his notice, and he might even err by a few years in the matter of Waller's appearance as a poet. But he could never have mistaken a youth of eighteen for a man of thirty. His characteristic of Waller remains, as a whole, in force as a vivid personal reminiscence, and places him in just that light in Falkland's circle which the new evidence, about to be introduced, demands. From Aubrey, we have only the testimony that "Waller was very much admired at Court before the late civil warres."²

In the course of a careful search for references to Waller in the works of the company of writers around Lord Falkland, the "Characters" of Bishop Earle have furnished unexpected material. John Earle, born 1600, was Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, Chaplain to the Prince of Wales, an exile in Holland, and (after the Restoration) Bishop of Worcester, and finally Bishop of Salisbury. He died in the year 1665. Clarendon says of him:³ "He was an excellent poet, both in Latin, Greek, and English, as appears by many pieces yet abroad; though he suppressed many more himself, especially of English, incomparably good, out of austerity to those sallies of his youth. He was very dear to the Lord Falkland, with whom he spent as much time as he could make his own." From some lines of his on Francis Beaumont,⁴

¹ Cf. Lord Falkland's Poems, in Fuller Worthies Miscellanies, Vol. 3, ed. Rev. A. B. Grosart.

² Lives of Eminent Men, Vol. II, 1813, p. 564.

³ Life, Vol. I. Oxford, 1827, p. 58.

⁴ Cf. Beaumont and Fletcher, ed. Geo. Darley, London, 1872, p. lvii.

which cannot have been composed after Earle was twenty years of age, it is possible to form an opinion of his poetic tastes. The tone of the verses is far deeper and fuller than that of the ordinary poetical panegyric.

"Such strength, such sweetness couched in every line,
Such life of fancy, such high choice of brain,
Naught of the vulgar wit or borrowed strain;

And these so unaffectedly expressed,
All in a language purely flowing dressed;
And all so born within thyself, thine own,
So new, so fresh, so nothing trod upon."

It is evident that Earle, at least as a young man, found his ideal of poetical expression in the romantic poetry of the period of James I. That he was fastidious appears from Aubrey's remark that Earle "would not allow Lord Falkland to be a good poet, though a great wit." His ability as a poet is further attested by "Lines on Sir John Burroughs," and "On the Death of the Duke of Pembroke."¹ The work of Earle which is of importance for our present purpose is entitled "Microcosmographie, or a Peece of the World Discovered," and was first published in three editions in 1628 (London). The first edition in the present century (ed. Bliss, 1811) was followed in 1868 by Mr. Arber's Reprint. In 1871 a manuscript of the work was discovered at Durham, differing very considerably from the first printed editions, and containing the colophon: "Ffinis. December, this 14th day, 1627." Rev. J. T. Fowler has published a collation of this MS with Arber's Reprint, in Notes and Queries, Fourth Series, VIII and IX.

No. 24 in the list of "Characters" [No. 22 in the Durham MS], is entitled

*A Pot-Poet*²

Is the dreggs of wit; yet mingled with good drinke may haue some relish.
His Inspirations are more reall than others; for they doe but faine a God, but hee has his by him. His Verses run like the Tap, and his inuention as the Barrell,
ebs and flowes at the mercy of the spiggot. In thin drinke he aspires not aboue

¹ Cf. Microcosmography, by John Earle, D. D., ed. Philip Bliss (1811). First American edition, ed. L. L. Williams, Albany, 1867, pp. 169-171.

² The passages in italics are additions to the MS, first found in the printed editions of 1628. The passage in brackets is not found in the edition of 1628, printed by W. S. for Ed. Blount. This edition (reproduced by Bliss in his edition of 1811, and collated with that of 1732) may therefore be earlier than that of the same year reprinted by Arber. But cf. Arber, p. 10.

a Ballad, but a cup of Sacke inflames him, and sets his Muse and Nose a fire together. The Presse is his Mint, and stamps him now and then a sixe pence or two in reward of the baser coyne of his Pamphlet. *His workes would scarce sell for three halfe pence, though they are giuen oft for three Shillings*; ¹ but for the pretty Title that allures the Country Gentleman: and for which the Printer maintaines him in Ale a fortnight. His Verses are like his clothes, *miserable Cento's and patches, yet their pace* is not altogether so hobling as an Almanacks. The death of a great man or the *burning* of a house furnish him with an Argument, and the nine Muses are out strait in mourning gowne, and Melpomine cryes Fire, Fire. [*His other Poems are but Briefs in Rime, and like the poore Greekes collections to redeeme from captiuitie.*] *He is a man now much imploy'd in commendations of our Navy, and a bitter inueigher against the Spaniard.* His frequent'st Workes goe out in single sheets, and are chanted from market to market, to a vile tune, and a worse throat: whilst the poore Country wench melts like her butter to heare them. And these are the Stories of some men of Tiburne, or a strange Monster out of Germany: or sitting in a Baudy-house, hee writes Gods Iudgements. He *ends* at last in some obscure painted Cloth, to which *himselfe made the Verses*, and his life like a Canne too full spills vpon the bench. He leaues twenty shillings on the score, which *my Hostesse looses*.

This characterization presents varied features, constantly recurring, which render it impossible to believe that the satire is directed against a type. Some individual poet is meant.² This is further strikingly confirmed by the careful re-editing (between December 1627 and 1628) of just those portions which contain the most unmistakable hits. Some obnoxious poet and character is here pilloried. It can scarcely be any other than Waller.

First in Waller's works, five poems have always stood, all poems of occasion. The order has not always been the same, for Fenton (p. xvi) complains in 1729 that the verses "To the King on his Navy," in all the editions since the Restoration, have the inconvenient date 1626 added to the title, whereas in his opinion

¹ For "His . . . Shillings," the Durham MS has "His workes neere excede thre half pence, and would hardly sell so."

For "miserable . . . pace is," the Durham MS has "and raggs and patches get their footemanshippe"; for "hobling," "shuffling"; for "burning," "fireing"; for "gowne," "cloaths"; for "His other . . . Spaniard," "At more leisur'd times he makes disticks on noblemen, which are put vnder their two-penny pictures that hang in the bookbinders' shops."

For "frequent'st," "commonest"; for "out in single," "forth in small"; for "ends," "drops away"; for "my Hostesse looses," "mine Host looseth."

² For a parallel, though immeasurably less clever, cf. "A Tippling Poetaster," in Follie's Anatomie, compiled by Henry Hutton, Dunelmensis, London, 1619 [cited by Brydges, *Censura Literaria*, II 406-7]. In this the Water Poet is plainly satirized.

the verses were written in 1635. Bell (1854) thinks the date of the piece uncertain. The writer in the *Quarterly Review*, October 1886 (p. 302, note), thinks it "may have been written as late as 1635." But no sufficient reasons have ever been adduced for this date, and we have the old editions with the date 1626 still to reckon with. No more striking correspondence of date can be imagined. A comparison of the Durham MS (finished Dec. 1627) with the accessible printed editions of 1628 shows that the passage in question was during that time twice re-edited. The words in the MS are: "At more leisur'd times he makes *disticks* on noble-men which are put under their twopenny pictures that hang in the bookbinders' shops." For this, the first edition in 1628 substitutes "He is a man now much imploy'd in commendations of our Nauy, and a bitter inueigher against the Spaniard." To this last, the second edition of 1628 prefixes: "His other Poems are but Briefs in Rime, and like the poore Greekes collections to redeeme from captiuity." The three passages are all extremely clever attacks upon Waller's poetry, both as to subject and form. We are forced to conclude that Waller had just descended upon the town "like a tenth muse" (to use Clarendon's phrase), when Earle is portraying him as the man "now much imploy'd in commendations of our Nauy."

The very first gibe of Earle, that "the death of a great man" furnishes his Pot-Poet "with an argument," finds its application in the verses which have usually occupied the second place in Waller's volume: "Of his Majesty's receiving the News of the Duke of Buckingham's Death." If the Durham MS contains the reference to "the death of a great man," and it would appear from Mr. Fowler's collation that it does contain them, then there is a difficulty in the date; for Buckingham was murdered August 23, 1628. The discrepancy is not to be explained, except on the supposition that Waller had written verses on a similar subject before, and that these have not come down to us. He himself notes the fact that one of his occasional poems was for many years lost (Fenton's ed., 1730, p. 144). As far as the printed editions are concerned, we venture to assume that the reference is to Waller, and that for the following reasons:

The duke's taking off was hailed with delight by the nation, and Waller's fulsome adulation of him in the poem as a limb lopped from the State and from Charles could not but excite attention and remonstrance. But the chief point is that the verses

are not an elegy, nor an epitaph. Such were common enough on the death of great men. The death of Buckingham actually furnishes the poet with his "argument," and the piece marks a new departure in English poetry. On this point Mr. Gosse may be cited (p. 69): "We have but to consider how difficult it would have been for one of the romantic poets to have proceeded with a theme like this" [he is speaking of another one of Waller's first five poems of occasion]. "It was very seldom that they would allow themselves to be entrapped into the treatment of public recent events."

That "Pot-Poet" had become in literature a general term of reproach, with no implication of booziness, is shown in the following passage from John Taylor, the Water Poet:

"But there's a kind of stealing mysticall,
Pick-pocket wits, filch-lines sophisticall,
Villaines in verse, base runagates in rime,
False rob-wits, and contemned slaves of time,
Purloining Thieues, that pilfer from desert
The due of study, and reward of art.
Pot-Poets, that haue still to steale translations,
And (into English) filch strange tongues and Nations,
And change the language of good wits unknown,
These Thieush rascals print them for their own."¹

It remains to bring forward certain minor proofs which would establish nothing, if unsupported, but which are offered as corroborative evidence, without prejudice to the main argument.

In the Durham MS the Pot-Poet "drops away [ed. of 1628, 'ends'] at last in some obscure painted cloth." The printed editions add: "to which himself made the verses." 'Painted cloth' usually meant old tapestry hangings, or canvas painted in oil, on which scraps of verses were written. But it also signified such verses as part of the show in a masque. This is shown in Ben Jonson's *Expostulation with Inigo Jones*:

"O shows, shows, mighty shows!
The eloquence of masques! What need of prose,
Or verse, or prose, t' express immortal you?
You are the spectacle of state, 'tis true,
Court-hieroglyphics, and all arts afford,
In the mere perspective of an inch-board;

¹ Works, comprised in the Folio edition of 1630 [the date corresponds closely with that of Earle]. Spenser Soc., 1869, p. 281.

Ben Jonson's Works, Boston, 1869, p. 777.

You ask no more than certain politic eyes,
 Eyes that can pierce into the mysteries
 Of many colours, read them, and reveal
 Mythology, there painted on slit deal.
 Or to make boards to speak! there is a task!
 Painting and carpentry are the soul of masque.
 Pack with your pedling poetry to the stage,
 This is the money-got mechanic age.

Almighty Architecture, who no less
 A goddess is, than painted cloth, deal board,
 Vermillion, lake, or crimson can afford
 Expression for. . . .
 What poesy ere was painted on a wall,
 That might compare with thee?"

Among Waller's poems is an undated one entitled 'The Miser's Speech; in a Masque' [Fenton's ed. 1730, p. 86]. After referring to Atalanta and the golden balls, to Jupiter and Danae—subjects which were frequently represented in painted cloth—the poet brings in the story of Midas:

"'Twas not revenge for griev'd Apollo's wrong,
 Those asse's ears on Midas' temples hung:
 But fond repentance of his happy wish,
 Because his meat grew metal like his dish.
 Would Bacchus bless me so, I'd constant hold
 Unto my wish, and die creating gold."

There are two considerations which point to this piece of Waller's as the one Earle had in mind. In the first place, the poet was not only rich, but had also the reputation of neglecting no opportunity of augmenting his fortune.¹ The stroke was therefore a fine one, to identify him with his miser in the masque, and, with the original character of the Pot-Poet in mind, to parody the words "I'd . . . die creating gold" by "He ends at last in some obscure painted cloth, to which himself made the Verses." The second consideration is drawn from the character of Midas, as understood in Bishop Earle's time. Geo. Sandys comments upon him in his *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished* (ed. 1640, p. 213): "Midas signifies a foole . . . For Pan contending with Apollo in musick, the mountaine Tmolus being their Judge, gave the palme to Apollo: but sottish Midas protests against the sentence; for which Apollo produceth his eares to the length and

¹ Waller's Works, ed. Bell, 1854, p. 17.

instability of an Asse's. Pan presents illiterate rusticity; Apollo a minde imbued with the divine endowments of art and nature." Midas, appearing in the character of a contemner of good literature, may be well applied to the case in hand; for, if Earle ridiculed Waller at all, it was certainly in the character of a foolish perverter of literary style. The identification of Waller with his own painted-cloth hero, not only in his fate but in his character, would be quite of a piece with the rest of Earle's delineation, and seems in a high degree probable. The expression "in an *obscure* painted cloth" is suggestive. No masque, of which Waller's verses form a part, has been found, and it is extremely probable that the title should have been 'The Miser's Speech; appropriate to a Masque.' Earle could in any case fail to share Waller's opinion as to the character and merit of the piece, and could prefer to see in it the row of pictures on painted cloth, with the appropriate tags of verses.

From the foregoing digression, as well as from the main argument, to which we now return, it is evident that the class of themes chosen by Waller appeared to Earle, who had grown up in the nobler traditions of the preceding reign, quite unsuited to poetic treatment, and the treatment itself deserving of ridicule. The, to him, ludicrous similarity between such subjects of passing interest, and the themes with which the penny poets tried to catch the popular ear, suggested the idea of making the rich, courtly, temperate, but despicable Waller sit for his portrait. He appears to us, clad in the "centos and patches" of the drunken rhymer, from whom he would have revolted, and with whom he had nothing in common except the unpardonably unpoetic range of subject, the offending distich, and a liberal proportion of heathen mythology in every copy of verses.

Certain brief characteristics of John Earle have been handed down, which prove him capable of fine raillery. Wood (Ath. Oxon.) says of him: 'His younger years were adorned with oratory, poetry, and witty fancies; and his elder with quaint preaching and subtle disputes.' Clarendon (Life) reports: '[He was] of a conversation so pleasant and delightful, so very innocent, and so very facetious, that no Man's Company was more desired, and more loved.' In Waller's case, the painful difference apparent between his real character and his talent and pretensions excited frequent criticism. Aubrey relates: 'He had but a tender

¹ Lives of Eminent Men, Vol. II, 1813, p. 565.

weake body, but was always very temperate; but — made him damnable drunk at Somerset House, where at the water stayres he fell down, and had a cruel fall. 'Twas pity to use such a sweet swan so inhumanely." And finally, Clarendon tells us plainly that Waller was detested by the very men who welcomed him in their company for his pleasant society.

To sum up the whole argument: if Earle rallied Waller in 'A Pot-Poet,' it is possible to determine the date of composition of one, and perhaps two, of the undated poems. We are also able to get a far clearer idea of the interests of the literary circle, presided over by the immortal Lord Falkland, into which Dr. Morley introduced Waller.¹ It is also rendered extremely probable that Waller did not write in the couplet before 1626, and that it was introduced into the Falkland circle about 1627. Finally, as a result of the last point, if the kind of verse which "set the type in England for one hundred and fifty years" was produced in that country before 1626-7, it was not produced by Waller.

With the claim set up for Waller, that he wrote perfect couplets at a very early age, two assumptions have always been made: that the published editions do not vary, and that the poems as first published in 1645 are the exact pieces that Waller produced some eighteen years before, unchanged and unaltered. The first of these assumptions can be neither confirmed nor disproved without a careful study of the representative editions, beginning with those of 1645. Such a study and comparison appears never to have been made. The second assumption has never been proved, and can perhaps, owing to lack of evidence, never be successfully disputed. In the preface to the first edition after the Restoration (1664), Waller (signing himself Albinovanus) says that on his return from banishment he 'was troubled to find his name in print; but somewhat satisfied to see his lines so ill-rendered that he might justly disown them.' 'The many and gross faults' have, according to Waller, all been made by the printer. The latter is promptly castigated for his delinquencies, while the reader is

¹ The extraordinary intimacy between Dr. Morley and John Earle is another piece of corroborative evidence. During the exile, they lived one year together, in the same house at Antwerp, and Morley preceded Earle as Bishop of Worcester (1660-62). Both being Oxford men, with only three years difference in age, the conclusion is at least a probable one that Earle not only knew Morley during the years when the latter guided Waller's literary studies at Beaconsfield, but that he was already at that time acquainted with the character and aims of Morley's rich but singular pupil.

assured that the poems 'are here to be found as [the author] first writ them.' In 1664 Waller was enjoying fame as the founder of a new school of poetry, and this fame he must have been anxious to increase, by freeing his poems from any earlier blemishes. The same year (1664) finds Dryden praising him as "the first that made writing easily an art; first showed us how to conclude the sense, most commonly in distichs." We should perhaps be unwarranted in doubting the truth of Waller's assertion without evidence, but it is interesting to note the extreme anxiety of Opitz under somewhat similar circumstances (1624),¹ and the haste with which, in the following year, he issued a new edition of his poems, in which the verses were made to conform to his new theory of accent, and of the regular alternation of arsis and thesis. Malherbe also, in France, assures his public in 1627, the year before his death, that

' Les puissantes faveurs dont Parnasse m'honore
Non loin de mon berceau commencèrent leurs cours ;
Je les possédais jeune, et les possède encore
A la fin de mes jours.'²

So Waller told Aubrey that 'when he was a briske young sparke, and first studyed poetry, 'Methinks,' said he, 'I never sawe a good copie of English verses; they want smoothnesse; then I began to essay.'³

Lotheissen, *Geschichte der französischen Literatur im 17 Jahrhundert*, I (1877), adduces facts to prove that Malherbe, born in 1555, did not attain to his fine manner of writing before 1599, at the age of forty-four; and he attained it as Waller gained his mastery of English, by steady industry. From 1597 on, it is possible to trace Malherbe's closer and closer adherence to strict canons of form. Lotheissen mentions the existence of four anthologies in the period from 1597 to 1611, all containing poems by Malherbe. It is not probable that any early poems by Waller will turn up in the collections, but it must be acknowledged that at least a critical comparison of the printed editions of his poems is much to be desired. But such an examination cannot affect his permanent position among the literary artists of the new school. For that,

¹ The question whether Opitz originally authorized the Zingref edition of his poems, is still unsettled; cf. Braune's *Neudrucke*, Nr. 15 (Halle, 1879), S. vi; and Witkowski, *Martin Opitzens Aristarchus, und Buch von der deutschen Poeterei*, Leipzig, 1888, S. 36 f.

² Ode à Louis XIII partant pour la Rochelle.

³ *Lives of Eminent Men*, II 563.

a broader basis of comparison is necessary, and this is to a great degree supplied in the works of Waller's elder contemporary, George Sandys.

Dryden, in the preface to his *Fables*, calls Sandys "the best versifier of the former age, if I may venture to call it by that name, which was the former part of this concluding century." The work of Sandys which elicited this high praise is his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a book which has fallen into unmerited neglect. In 1872 the Rev. Richard Hooper published an excellent edition of Sandys' *Poetical Works* [Paraphrases of the Psalms, etc.]. In the introduction he gives much information as to the early editions of the '*Metamorphoses*.'¹ The earliest complete edition is that of 1626, but in Brydges' *Censura Literaria* (VI 132), Mr. Haslewood gives an account of an edition of 1621, containing the first five books, no copy of which has since been found. It is known that George Sandys went to Virginia in 1621,² as treasurer of the colony, and Stith, in his *History of Virginia*, Williamsburg, 1747, p. 303, under date of 1623, writes: "In the midst of these tumults and alarms the Muses were not silent. For at this time Mr. George Sandys, the Company's Treasurer of Virginia, made his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*."³ In the poems of Michael Drayton (1627) a poetical epistle to Sandys in Virginia is published, which must have been written while the latter was in America:

"Go on with Ovid, as you have begun
With the first five books; let your numbers run
Glib as the former, so shall it live long,
And do much honour to our English tongue."

It is therefore certain that Sandys, before 1623, and probably before his departure for Virginia in 1621, had published a translation of part of the *Metamorphoses*. That he continued correcting and improving the successive editions up to his death in 1638 is

¹ A complete bibliography of Sandys' *Metamorphoses* will be found in the *Dictionary of Books relating to America*, by Jos. Sabin, Parts 107-108. New York, 1889, p. 440.

² Cf. Hooper, p. xxvii.

³ This statement is repeated in Justin Winsor's *Critical and Narrative History of America*, Vol. 3, by Robt. A. Brock, Boston, 1884, p. 145. Bancroft, *History*, Vol. I, 1883, p. 126, mentions Sandys in another connection, but apparently thinks it not worth mentioning that the first considerable literary work in America was done by Sandys in Virginia at this very early date.

certain; that of 1632 contains the following, in an Address to the Reader: "To the Translation I have given what perfection my Pen could bestow, by polishing, altering or restoring, the harsh, improper or mistaken, with a nicer exactness than perhaps is required in so long a labour."

It is, however, unlikely that the change in the handling of the couplet was great, or, in other words, that the number of unstopt lines will be found to be much greater in the earliest edition.¹ In 1626 Sandys was already forty-nine years old, and had in all probability essentially formed his style. In 1615 he had published in prose: 'A Relation of a Journey begun An. Dom. 1610. Foure Bookes. Containing a Description of the Turkish Empire, of Aegypt, of the Holy Land, and the Remote parts of Italy, and Islands adjoining.' This book has been praised by authors of his and our own day alike, as 'learned without pedantry, and circumstantial without being tedious.' We have it further, on the authority of Wood, that Sandys returned 'master of several languages.'

The circumstances of his journey are of interest for literature. Son of the Archbishop of York, educated at Oxford, left in easy circumstances, preceded to Paris by his elder brother, who had written a famous political tractate while there in 1599,² George Sandys begins his journey in 1610 as a scholar and gentleman of leisure, proceeding to the great centres of culture, and to the Holy Places. Of France he says: 'I began my journey through France hard upon the time when that execrable murder was committed upon the person of Henry IV by an obscure varlet.'

It is possible that we may never get nearer a solution of the mooted question of French influence upon English poetry just at that period than is presented in the case of Sandys. Malherbe, who introduced the 'classical' reform in French literature, who forbade *enjambement* in verse, had been for ten years an acknowledged authority in the French literary world, and had been since 1605 at the court, attached to the person of Henry IV, and setting

¹ There is no copy of the edition of 1626 in America, unless in some private library. The Lenox Library in New York possesses a copy of the edition of 1632, and a comparison of the first book in it with the same book in the folio of 1640 shows an almost exact agreement between them in the number of unstopt couplets.

² In his 'Discoveries' Ben Jonson mentions Sir Edwin Sandys with Sir Philip Sidney, and Richard Hooker, as excellent, 'either for judgment or style.' Works, p. 873.

the literary taste. To suppose that Sandys should not have become acquainted with the canons of French literature, and of Malherbe's reform, appears absurd.

It is not the object of any part of the present argument to attempt to prove that the gradual growth of the English heroic couplet in non-dramatic verse, from the epigrammatic and satirical style of Bishop Hall¹ and other writers about 1600 to its culmination at the end of the seventeenth century, was at any time violently disturbed by French influence. The English heroic couplet is a thoroughly national product, arrived at by a slow process of evolution. But, on the other hand, a sudden quickening of literary conscience in certain English writers, about the years 1616-26, as to the sin involved in the unstopt line, has never been explained, and it is not probable that any reasoning about the 'sober deliberativeness,' the introspection, the 'national quiet' which the new century brought in, will ever be able to explain it. At all events, it was Sandys, and not Waller, who at the beginning of the third decade of the century, first of all Englishmen, made a uniform practice of writing in heroic couplets which are on the whole in accord with the French rule, and which, for exactness of construction, and for harmonious versification, go far towards satisfying the demands of the later 'classical' school in England. The proof of this lies in a detailed comparison of Sandys' verse with that of Waller. The edition of Sandys' '*Metamorphosis Englished*' used for this purpose was the folio of 1640 (London, printed by J. L. for Andrew Hebb), a fine copy of which is in the library of the Peabody Institute in Baltimore.

On a basis of the first eighteen hundred lines in the works of each author, it was found that Sandys has 14 per cent of unstopt lines, Waller 23 per cent. For unstopt couplets the first book of the *Metamorphoses* (832 lines) was compared with the first 1025 lines (in couplets) in Fenton's edition of Waller. The percentage of unstopt couplets in Waller is 5.26, in Sandys 1.8 (one-third of the number in Waller). Sandys avoids an unstopt couplet, by introducing a parenthesis, 5 times, an average of .6 per cent; Waller 14 times, an average of 1.3 per cent (twice Sandys' average). Sandys has nine instances of feminine rhyme, Waller none.

¹ Schipper, *Englische Metrik*, II 206-8, marks in Bp. Hall the beginning of regularity in the use of the couplet, and finds in most of the following poets this regular epigrammatic character sustained.

These results are decisive as to the relation of Sandys to Waller. But it is also interesting to compare their use of the unstopt couplet with that of other poets. This it is now possible to do conveniently, as the necessary statistics have been compiled by Wm. Edw. Mead, in his dissertation, 'The Versification of Pope in its relation to the Seventeenth Century,' Leipzig, 1889. Adopting Mead's statistics of Pope's couplet, the result is as follows: In the avoidance of unstopt lines Sandys is found to be midway between Waller and Pope, the ratio being, Waller 23 per cent, Sandys 14.7, and Pope 6. In the unstopt couplet the ratio is a similar one. Waller has 5.26 per cent, Sandys 1.8, and Pope very few indeed. Mead has found six instances of unstopt couplet in the works of Pope, exclusive of the translations.

The importance of these figures is obvious. However much we may be influenced in favor of Waller by the smoothness and easy flow of his verse, certainly no modern critic has maintained that these characteristics, subjectively considered, offer a practical basis for any doctrine in poetics. No one has yet set up any precise and special test for the 'classical' verse for the period culminating in Pope, except the avoidance of unstopt couplets. This also is the sole claim that has been allowed in France to Malherbe. According to this test, therefore, it was Sandys, the predecessor of Waller by several years, who first set the type of composition for the new school, and whose technical execution is more correct than that of any English writer up to Dryden and Pope.

It now remains to produce direct evidence that Sandys, while possessing a less happy poetical instinct than Waller, was more conscious of the new rule, and was, in his earlier work, more conscientious in following it. It is notorious that Waller's first couplets do not differ in execution from his last. But a careful examination of the whole of Sandys' *Metamorphoses* reveals the fact that there is from first to last a gradual increase in the number of unstopt lines and couplets:

		Unstopt Lines.	Unstopt Couplets.
B. I	832 lines,	14 per cent,	1.8 per cent.
II,	966 "	16.5 "	3 "
III,	820 "	16 "	3 "
IV,	906 "	17.6 "	3.4 "
V,	774 "	24 "	5.8 "
VI,	770 "	20 "	6 "
VII,	932 "	23 "	7.7 "

	Unstopt Lines.	Unstopt Couplets.
VIII, 984 lines,	25.5 per cent,	6 per cent,
IX, 732 "	28 "	9.7 "
X, 820 "	28.5 "	8.4 "
XI, 836 "	33.9 "	11 "
XII, 674 "	33 "	10.8 "
XIII, 1092 "	28 "	8.5 "
XIV, 928 "	30 "	10.8 "
XV, 936 "	29 "	10.4 "

This represents a gradual increase of more than one hundred per cent in the number of unstopt lines, and of nearly six hundred per cent of unstopt couplets.

Sandys' translation of the first book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which appears in the edition of 1640, exhibits 32 per cent of unstopt lines, of which 10 per cent mark unstopt couplets. Appended to the translation is the following expressive motto: '*Splendidis longum valedico nugis.*' It is plain that this was the last of his translations. It is impossible that the small number of unstopt couplets and lines in the first books of the *Metamorphoses* should be the result of later correction on the part of Sandys, for in that case the translation of Virgil would exhibit a similar percentage. The first books of the *Metamorphoses* represent his first literary work, when fresh from theoretical studies of poetics. In the later books, led by his own sound poetic instinct, he gradually frees himself from the unnatural bondage of invariably stopt couplets.

Saintsbury (*History of Eliz. Lit.*, 1887, p. 454) says of English verse in the period of James I, that "a certain improvement in general technical execution testifies to longer practice." Theorists were not then, nor had not been, lacking, but just at the threshold of the new age there are two poets, very different in rank, who accompany the exercise of their art by curious studies, interesting for the history of the couplet. They are Sir John Beaumont and Drummond of Hawthornden. The first of these need not detain us long. In verses, which must have been written before 1625, he lauds King James as the real author of a reform in poetry. James had published his '*Essays of a Prentise, in the Divine Art of Poesie*' in 1585, four years before the publication of Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*; but it is not probable that it had ever exercised influence in England. Beaumont, while praising the king, has his eye upon influences from abroad. The verses are



interesting, as giving one of the first contemporary descriptions of the purely reflective couplet: ¹

'Forgive my boldnesse, that I here present
The life of Muses yielding true consent
In ponder'd numbers, which with ease I try'd,
When your judicious rules have been my guide.

In ev'ry language now in Europe spoke
By nations which the Roman empire broke,
The relish of the Muse consists in rime,
One verse must meete another like a chime.

In many changes these may be exprest,
But those that joyne most simply run the best

[i. e. heroic couplet]:

Their form surpassing far the fether'd staves

[i. e. stanzas],

Vaine care, and needless repetition saves.'

In a set of verses which must have been written in the period between James' death (1625) and his own (1627),² he indicates the progress of the reform in England:

'He leads the lawless poets of our times
To smother cadence, to exacter rimes:
He knew it was the proper work of kings,
To keep proportion, ev'n in smallest things.'³

Drummond of Hawthornden, born 1585, is a poet of far wider range. Though a Scot, he wrote pure and 'softly sliding' English verses. Drummond was probably a closer student of foreign poetry than any other man in Great Britain. He was in France throughout the years 1607-8. By 1611 he had gathered together at his pleasant country-seat one hundred and twenty French books. In 1609 he entered in his note-book the following works of Ronsard as having been read during that year: *La Franciade*, *Amours*, *Hymnes*, *Odes*, *Elegies et Eclogues*.⁴ In 1619 occurred the famous conversations with Ben Jonson, who was his guest at Hawthornden. Drummond informs us that Jonson praised his

¹ Cf. Chalmers' *English Poets* (1810), Vol. 6, p. 30. The edition of Beaumont's *Poems*, by Rev. A. B. Grosart, in Fuller Worthies Library, was not accessible.

² Cf. *Dict. of Nat. Biog.*, where the received date, 1628, is shown to be an error.

³ 'To the Glorious Memory of our Late Sovereign Lord, King James.'

⁴ D. Laing, *Archaeologia Scotica*, Vol. IV (1857), p. 74.

Epitaph on Prince Henry, 'save that his verses smelled too much of the schools,' and that he 'wished, to please the king, that the piece 'Forth Feasting' had been his own.'¹ In the first of the pieces mentioned, *Tears on the Death of Moeliades* (196 lines), published in 1613, there are eighteen per cent of unstopt lines, representing five per cent of unstopt couplets. But in 'Forth Feasting' (408 lines), published in 1617, there are only seven per cent of unstopt lines, and not a single unstopt couplet. In the *Elegy on the Victorious King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus* (1632), and in other later pieces, there is a very large number of unstopt couplets.²

It is evident that the history of Drummond's verse is similar to that of Sandys'. Returning home from his two years' stay in France, he continues his poetical studies, and produces verse which in the main comes up to even fastidious demands of the new canons then forming. But in the poems of his later years, the strenuous rule is more and more neglected, and a vigorous, harmonious couplet is produced, which is remarkably modern in type.

These two British poets, who were perhaps the most studious and critical of their time, are the very ones who may have come most directly under the influence of the literary movement abroad, especially in France.³ It is they also, who, on returning, wrote the most correct verses; which were, however, less graceful and melodious than those of Waller. It would be idle to go further, and to assert foreign influence in a case where direct proof is not forthcoming, but the coincidence is remarkable.

Waller's verses are not only more graceful and melodious than those of the writers we have been considering; they are also

¹ D. Laing, *Archaeologia Scotica*, Vol. IV (1857), pp. 247-8.

² Drummond's Works, Edinburgh, 1711.

³ It may be objected that Michael Drayton's *Heroical Epistles* (1597) are comparatively free from unstopt couplets. But, aside from the fact that Drayton did not habitually write in this metre, his style is purely Elizabethan, and lacking in every requirement of the reformed poetry: in classical allusion, varying caesura, fixed accent; in short, in 'the strong lines that catch the times.' His metre is as far from the comparative 'classicism' of Drummond, as is that of William Browne, though the *Britannia's Pastorals* contain a larger proportion of 'free' lines.

⁴ Drummond was thoroughly acquainted with Italian poetry also. This is attested by his sonnets, and by the memoranda of books read.

